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General and complete disarmament: Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction

Note verbale dated 7 July 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations addressed to the Office for Disarmament Affairs

The Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations presents its compliments to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and has the honour to transmit herewith a summary of the outcome of the International Seminar on National Implementation of Non-proliferation Obligations: the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons as an Example of Effective Assistance in National Implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which took place in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, from 22 to 23 June 2009 (see annex).

In that context, the Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina would like to share this information with all Member States of the First Committee of the General Assembly.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 7 July 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations addressed to the Office for Disarmament Affairs

International Seminar on National Implementation of Non-proliferation Obligations: the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons as an Example of Effective Assistance in National Implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention

Concluding plenary session — seminar outcome

1. Implementing the requirements to prevent, and as may be needed manage the consequences of, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and related materials, equipment and technologies is a complex undertaking. States are called upon to take a range of actions under international regimes and treaties, Security Council resolutions and other arrangements. Such steps may include, for example, the enactment of legislation and the adoption of regulatory and administrative implementation measures, the development of capacity in the form of infrastructure, expertise, procedures and resource allocation, and the commitment to ensure that these measures will be applied in a sustainable manner.

2. This seminar has looked at the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as examples for how these processes can be managed and implemented successfully. At the same time, there were enlightening discussions about similar efforts by other organizations that assist countries in developing national implementation capacities in other areas of WMD non-proliferation.

3. At the national level, this calls for a holistic approach in the formulation of policies and strategies, and effective coordination between the different actors involved. This is not only a matter of intra-governmental coordination (which is essential, if sometimes difficult), but also of outreach to and involvement of other stakeholders, including industry, academia and civic society.

4. At the regional level, cooperation between countries is essential so as to ensure that the measures adopted by one country match those adopted by its neighbours; that the potential for regional synergism of non-proliferation systems is exploited to the full and that no implementation gaps are left exposed. In the context of the Western Balkans region, the issue of effective implementation of WMD non-proliferation objectives and policies also relates to stabilization and association agreements with the European Union.

5. At the international level, a multitude of actors (States; the United Nations and its institutions and specialized agencies; treaty-based organizations such as OPCW and ISU; other intergovernmental organizations; international organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross; as well as non-governmental organizations such as VERTIC or sipri) are active in promoting the implementation of non-proliferation goals. A multitude of actors are offering support in the adoption of non-proliferation measures to States seeking advice and help. In addition, a productive dialogue has evolved between these international and national bodies and representatives of academia (in the form of international science unions and

academies, for example) and industry (in the form of trade associations and even individual companies).

6. A pertinent example is OPCW, who after the First Review Conference developed and implemented its Action Plan to foster national implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. These efforts are continuing also after the Second Review Conference, so as to ensure full and effective implementation of all CWC requirements by all States Parties. Furthermore, the steps taken by the OPCW and other international agencies in response to the terror attacks against the United States of America in 2001 illustrate that international organizations can, within their mandates and based on their technical competencies, contribute effectively to mitigating the threats of WMD being acquired and used by non-State actors.

7. Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1540 (2004) and related subsequent resolutions have further developed the scope of State responsibility with regard to preventing, deterring and managing the consequences of the threats of WMD terrorism. They also reminded States of the urgency of adopting measures to implement the various international instruments aimed at countering the threat of terrorism, as well as their obligations under the existing multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. They furthermore reiterated the responsibilities of international organizations to contribute to preventing WMD acquisition and use by non-State actors.

8. This wide range of initiatives and actors calls for close coordination and effective cooperation: a move away from the all-too-familiar "patchwork approach" driven by institutional mandates and agendas. It calls instead for a more integrated, holistic and competency-based approach towards WMD non-proliferation. That such integrated and coordinated approaches can work, despite legal, structural, institutional and political constraints, has been shown in other areas of international action, for example in the field of humanitarian assistance.

9. At the national level, a holistic and integrated approach to WMD non-proliferation will be essential in particular for countries with limited resources and capacity. Assistance offered by external actors, however well-meaning, will only in the long run be effective if properly coordinated and well-tailored to the actual needs. Otherwise, there is the risk of institutional overload, confusion and perhaps even loss of priority and overall direction.

10. At this seminar, we have learned a lot about the activities undertaken by OPCW as well as other organizations to assist States with meeting their obligations in the field of WMD non-proliferation. We have also learned a lot about the efforts undertaken by Bosnia and Herzegovina and other States in the region to put into place effective measures to counter WMD proliferation attempts. Much work has already been done and good results have already been accomplished. But more remains yet to be done.

11. During the discussions, a proposal was brought forward for a project that is intended to address these issues in the context of the Western Balkans region. That project would attempt to develop a more integrated, holistic approach towards WMD non-proliferation implementation, working initially with Bosnia and Herzegovina as a pilot country but developing methodologies and approaches in and for a wider regional context. Specific measures to develop a coherent, effective and sustainable national strategy to counter WMD proliferation, in line with

international obligations, would be developed and implemented in partnership with all the organizations and agencies that are working towards effective non-proliferation implementation in their respective fields of responsibility and competence, as a pilot project. At the same time, countries of the region would be involved closely in a parallel, fully transparent, process of discussion, information exchange and experience-sharing. The project would help to identify and share "best practices" of implementing WMD non-proliferation objectives and policies, and thus contribute to regional cooperation. Such a project would at the same time help international agencies to better coordinate their implementation support/assistance activities.

12. This proposed project could be a tangible outcome of the discussions over the past two days of work — a project that resonates with the needs of the host country and that may find the support of other countries in the region as well as the different actors on the international scene that carry responsibilities in the field of WMD non-proliferation.